NOAA Environmental Literacy Grants (ELG) 2010 Informational Teleconference: Discussion Notes
Leaders: Carrie McDougall , John McLaughlin, and Sarah Schoedinger
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This document contains detailed information from the NOAA Environmental Literacy Grants informational conference call on January 21, 2010.

The first section (pages 1-20) is the verbatim transcript recorded during the introductory section of the call, when Sarah Schoedinger (SS) and Carrie McDougall (CM) provided a detailed review of the Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) for informal/nonformal science education projects issued January 19, 2010. *Please refer to a copy of the FFO when reading this section, as Carrie and Sarah often refer to page numbers from that document.* A copy of the FFO can be found on the Office of Education website:

http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/elg/elg10/documents/NOAA_Informal_Nonformal_Funding_opp_2010.pdf.

The question and answer portion of the conference call begins on page 21 and is a summary of the questions and answers discussed. This is not a verbatim transcript. Whenever possible, names and institutions are included with each question. In addition, each question is categorized so relevant topics can be searched if needed. Please refer to the verbatim conference call transcript, also posted on the FAQ webpage, for a word-for-word review of this section of the call.

Detailed Review of FY2010 FFO by Sarah Schoedinger (SS) and Carrie McDougall (CM) *(back to top)*

SS: All right. Well, good afternoon. This is Sarah Schoedinger from NOAA's Office of Education. We're - we have you all on mute because we have hundreds of people that are going to be dialing into this call today, for the next two hours, and decided that to manage the call, the best way for us to do that is to start out with us talking to you for awhile, and then we will give you an opportunity for a question and answer period.

Because we're anticipating actually having over 400 people dialing in, and the operator just told me that we only have about 240 who have dialed in thus far, we're going to wait just

about two or three more minutes before we get going, and I'll introduce our team here in the Office of Education, and that'll be the indication that we're really starting the call.

So in the meantime, you're going to listen to a little silence, maybe shuffling of papers, and if you want to get your copy of the Federal Funding Opportunity Announcement out, a link to that was sent to you in the email with the call in information, we recommend that you have that in front of you, because we're going to walk through that in the first part of our call today.

So, stand by and we will get going shortly, because we've got a lot to cover. Thanks.

All right. Well, welcome again. This is Sarah Schoedinger from NOAA's Office of Education. As I mentioned a few minutes ago, but for those of you who just joined us, we have a lot of people on this call. So unlike previous conference calls we've run, we actually have muted all of you.

So, you - if you have an issue that comes up, you can't hear us, and it's not something that the telecon company can take care of on their end - well first of all, if you have an issue that you can't resolve on your end, dial star 0 to talk to an operator. If they can't resolve it, they'll interrupt me and we'll try and resolve the issue on our end if we can, okay.

But to start off - and oh, we will unmute you when it's time for a Q&A. So what we're going to do today is walk through the Federal Funding Opportunity Announcement. You were sent a link to our Fundy Opportunities page. And, on that page is a direct link to a PDF document that is the announcement. I recommend you have a copy of that in front of you, because in order to do this within a two hour period with over 400 people on this call, we're pretty much going to have to walk through much of that document and highlight the things that are really important for you to know.

And then, for anything that we haven't answered, or isn't particular to your institution or project, and maybe generally of importance to the larger group, we'll have an opportunity for you to ask those questions after we go through this funding opportunity announcement. Before I do that, I would like to tell you who we have on this call from the Office of Education. In addition to myself, Sarah Schoedinger, I am joined by John McLaughlin and

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Carrie McDougall, who are Federal Program Officers for this funding opportunity, and we are assisted by Stacey Rudolph and Lexie Brown, who are also on this call.

A couple other quick notes. First of all, I'd like to apologize for the snafu we had with our email announcement some of you may have experienced yesterday. It - the problem has been resolved, and it shouldn't occur again. But, I do apologize for any spamming that may have occurred in the process.

Additionally, I realized -- given the franticness of some of the email messages we got -- that some people read our requirement that you register for this call if you wanted to call in, as a requirement to participate in the call, which is not the case. But, it is helpful for you to participate in the call, just because it just is an opportunity to sort of hear from us, you know, all the basics that you will need to know for applying. There will be opportunities to follow-up with us offline after this.

Okay, another thing. As you heard if you joined the call early, you heard the operator say that this call is being transcribed. We're doing that in addition to having our staff take some notes, so that we can make sure we capture all the questions and comments that we hear. And, we expect to post full notes on this call to our FAQ page about a week from now. So, you'll be able to get access to that, and that's especially important for those who weren't able to participate in the call, but just so also, you don't have to take notes frantically yourself.

Okay, so as I mentioned, we're going to walk through the FFO. And just to remind you - if you're not familiar with our funding process, the FFO for us -- the Federal Funding Opportunity Announcement -- is the legal document that contains all the instructions for submitting your letter of intent and your full application. We'll tell you where we are in the document so you can follow along. And, if you haven't already gotten a copy in front of you and have access to the Website right now, I recommend you download the copy from our Website ASAP.

And, I think that's about it. And at this point, we are going to have a Q&A period at the end of this, but at this point, I'm going to hand this off to CM, and she's going to take us through the first part of the FFO. Carrie.

CM: Okay. So as Sarah indicated, it's absolutely critical that you read the Federal Funding Opportunity Announcement. It's a long, dense document -- 34 pages in length -- and there's lots of detail in there, and - but the - but you got to read it. You got to read it thoroughly and carefully, and you'll really benefit from a thorough read. And so, this is sort of your help in reading it. We're going to walk you through the parts that we think are really important, but that doesn't mean the parts that we don't focus on today aren't really important.

So beginning on Page 1 of the Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity, just a quick review of the deadline. The first and most critical deadline that is very near is February 16, 2010, and at 5:00 pm Eastern Time, and that is for letters of intent. Letters of intent are required in order to be eligible to submit a full application. So, February 16 is the first deadline you want to keep in mind. And, the way you will submit a letter of intent is via email to oed.grants@noaa.gov, and that is in the FFO.

And then, the next deadline you want to keep in mind is April 6, 2010, and that's also a 5:00 Eastern deadline. And, that is the submission deadline for full applications. And, full applications will be submitted through Grants.gov. So, the first letter of intent, February 16. That gets submitted to us via email. And, the second is full applications due April 6, and those applications just come in through Grants.gov.

Okay, so the - let me just point out, we have a little question that came in, and I will indicate that if you are on our Website, the funding_op html page -- Funding Announcements page. You look down - pretty far down the page and you will see that it says, "See the Federal Funding Opportunity for details." And then it says, "The FFO will be available after January 22 from Grants.gov."

But if you keep reading, it also says, "You can also download a version of the FFO that contains additional formatting for increased readability in PDF format." And, that PDF format is a link. That will lead you to the PDF version of the FFO that I am reading from right now.

So, skip past that part about it not being available on Grants.gov yet, and we've provided you a pre-publication copy, if you will. And that's what we're walking through right now, okay.

Okay, moving along. I'm now going to move to Page 3 of the PDF FFO. And, I'm in the Program Objectives section. And, this is sort of our broad introductory section in which we sort of set the stage for this funding opportunity. And I want to highlight that in that first paragraph, we have a definition for Environmental Literacy. And, this is important because this is the Environmental Literacy Grant Program. So, you want to read that definition in the middle of that paragraph and make sure that you're project fits within that broad definition. That's your first indication that - as to whether this funding opportunity is appropriate for your project.

You will also want to look at our NOAA Education Strategic Plan, which you can find the link for that at the bottom of that first paragraph. That's hot off the press. We just completed that at the end of last year. It's a 20 year strategic plan.

And, it has several outcomes, and goals, and strategies, and these - this funding opportunity is one of the ways we work to meet those goals. You want to make sure that your project also fits within the Strategic Plan for NOAA Education. So you want to make sure you take a look at that. That should be considered a guiding document for you when you're thinking about your project.

I'm going to skip down to the last paragraph on Page 3, and I'm going to read it to you, because this is really the heart and soul of this funding opportunity.

"The goal of this funding opportunity is to support projects that engage the public in educational activities that utilize emerging and/or advanced technologies and leverage NOAA assets," -- I'll explain that in a second -- "to improve understanding and stewardship of the local and global environment."

"There is specific interest in projects that use emerging and/or advanced technologies to (1) facilitate outdoor experiences involving scientific inquiry and exploration of the natural world, apart from formal K-12 curricula; and (2) visualize, display, and interpret data to improve understanding and provide a systems perspective of Earth's dynamic processes."

So, I want to jump down -- I'm on Page 4 now -- there is a section in the middle of that page about NOAA assets. And you want to read that section, because we are requiring that you utilize some NOAA asset in your project. NOAA assets are vast. They include people, places, data sets, buoys, all kinds of things. But, we ask that you leverage at least one asset in your project.

And to help you do that, we've provided a list of NOAA assets, and you can see that list on a Website, which we've embedded in that paragraph, that is in italics. So, take a look at that list of NOAA assets. It's not meant to be an all inclusive list, but it should be a starter to give you a flavor of what's out there that's available for you to connect with. And - but, you really need to connect with one of those NOAA assets.

Okay. I'm now at the top of Page 4. I'm not going to read to you - we've attempted to come up with some definition for emerging and advanced technologies, because that is a major thrust of this funding opportunity. And so, here is our - this paragraph is our attempt at a definition. And, I'm not going to read you this, but I'm just going to highlight some of the things we're thinking when we say emerging and advanced technologies.

And, those are Web 2.0 technologies such as blogging, social - things - technologies that enable collaboration over the Internet. Social networking sites and so on. Also, innovative use of handheld devices. Custom applications for mobile phones. Use of live video and data, such as TelePresence. And then, any of the various cutting edge technologies that might be used for data visualization, either in the creation of visualization, or in the display of visualizations and data.

Additionally, we are supporting projects involving cyber learning, which is an NSF coined term. We've paraphrased the definition as taking and learning interactions conducted through the use of these and other technologies. Any of those types of projects, as long as they fit within some of the other project types, which I'm going to review, would be appropriate for this funding opportunity.

One special display system which we have focused a lot on in NOAA, and will continue to provide support for, are spherical display systems. Those are things like NOAA's Science On a Sphere, OmniGlobe, Global Imagination's Magic Planet; these are three dimensional, spherical screens that range typically in diameter from 18 inches to 6 feet.

And, they are physical exhibits that are typically built into museums, aquariums, and zoos, and used to display global data. So, that's what we're talking about when we say spherical display systems. And, we have a whole section on projects related to that, which I'll get into in a second.

All right, I'm at the bottom of Page 4, and I'm going to read you the list of the project types that are eligible for support in this funding opportunity. So first of all, if it's not obvious, I want to say that this funding opportunity is for projects that are focused on informal and non-formal science education activities. More specifically, we're interested in projects that either focus on one of these projects, or have several of these types of activities as part of the project.

And, those project types are technologically facilitated outdoor experiential learning for youth and adults. Projects involving this activity will use emerging and advanced technology to encourage greater participation in, exploration of, and understanding of outdoor environments apart from formal K-12 curricula. Public participation in science related to one or more of NOAA's mission goals.

Projects involving this activity will use emerging and/or advanced technologies to engage new audiences in scientific research collaborations, appliances, and/or enhance individual and group participation in scientific research projects. Exhibitions and online programs allowing the visualization and exploration of data supporting the interpretation of ocean, coastal, Great Lakes, weather, and climate sciences in informal/non-formal learning settings for public audiences.

Spherical display system programming that facilitates public audiences' interaction and learning with spheres. This would include spherical content development and integration with other visualization systems. Informal/non-formal science education professional development and training programs. Installations for integration into public exhibits with an

Earth systems science theme and advanced evaluation effort. I'm going to get into a little bit more detail on those items further on when we get to that in the FFO.

And finally, Professional development and training programs for informal/non-formal education staff and volunteer interpreters related to any of the above activities." One big note here is that in this particular funding opportunity, we are not going to consider the support of the development of films, television, and radio programs. And furthermore, permanent and traveling museum exhibitions will only be considered if they feature spherical display systems or data visualizations that are described above in the list that I just read.

You've heard me mention several times projects that are not formal K-12 curricula, and that's a major point we want to make here today. And the reason that we are not going to consider projects that relate to the formal K-12 curricula is that we have another funding opportunity that will be published in June 2010 that will be exclusively focused on K-12 education, teacher professional development, and student projects.

So, if you have a project that works for those audiences, we really ask that you hold your project and submit it to that funding opportunity, and not submit it. This is really for projects that are focused on audiences that are separate from teachers and students.

Additionally, we plan to issue another informal/non-formal science education focused funding opportunity in June 2011. So, if your project isn't really ready quite yet, maybe you should consider submitting your project in the next round of the informal/non-formal FFO, and that will be about a year and a half from now.

Okay, so I'm now on Page 6 of the FFO. And, I'm about half way down the page, and there is a list here that I also want to draw your attention to. And it starts off, "Successful projects under this funding opportunity will exhibit as many of the following characteristics as is relevant and/or feasible." Now, we don't expect that every project will address every item in this list, but focus on the words relevant and/or feasible.

So for example, if you are going to be conducting a project that has to do with climate change or climate in general, we would expect that your activities would be aligned to the Climate Literacy: Essential Principles of Climate Science framework, for example. So, this list

is very important. I'm not going to read it to you, but you really need to look at. And, I am going to highlight a couple of things though that are critical on it.

The third bullet contains partnership. We are very interested in seeing collaborations and partnerships in these projects. Partnerships with other institutions, as well as partnerships with NOAA programs and personnel. And, that would help ensure that NOAA assets are being leveraged. So, we're really hoping to see a lot of rich partnerships with NOAA.

Additionally on Page 7, we are strongly emphasizing that projects be based on needs assessments and established best practices in the fields of education and use of technology. Our reviewers will be instructed to look very, very critically to see that the project is well justified, and is based in these published and other best practices.

Specifically, we've highlighted a recent report from the National Research Council on learning science in informal environments. We've pulled out four of the key recommendations from that report, and we again instruct you to read these and consider them heavily. This is an example of established best practices in the field of informal education.

I want to specifically draw your attention on the top of Page 8's Recommendation Number 3, because it is so relevant to this funding opportunity, with a focus on technology. And, that is, educational tools and materials should be developed through iterative processes involving learners, educators, designers, and experts in science, including the sciences of human learning and development. That one is particularly important to this funding opportunity.

All right, I'm now about midway down Page 8, on Target Audiences. And, this is a critical piece to this funding opportunity. As I eluded to earlier, this is an informal/non-formal education focused funding opportunity, so the target audiences for your project should be exclusively, public audiences, including youth, families, adult learners, and community groups, and/or professional audiences. And those are the informal/non-formal education professionals and volunteer interpreters that may work in these various institutions.

In this funding opportunity, we are not interested in projects that involve activities that focus on activities that are linked to the school's curriculums or teacher professional development.

And, we've already received several questions concerning this issue, so I want to just delve into it a little bit more.

Any project, even if you are a museum or an aquarium, if you have a project that involves activities working with teachers in a professional development type of activity, activities that involve increasing a teacher's content or pedagogical knowledge, or students content knowledge, we would consider those K-12 projects, even though they are occurring in an informal environment. And, we ask that you hold those for consideration in our next funding opportunity.

Additionally, projects that support school field trips to museums or other types of institutions; those would not be eligible for support under this funding opportunity. And, if you have questions about really hybridized programs, please contact one of the listed folks in the funding opportunity, and we can guide you more specifically for your project type.

Also, another note on eligibility. Our funding is provided to us by Congress, and the emphasis is that we fund this - primarily US based activities. We do require that lead institutions for projects must be US institutes; however, foreign entities may be project partners, and activities may take place outside of the US. However, we do expect that the bulk of the impact and activities take place within the US.

Historically, we've had projects where a lot of the activities were taking place outside of the US. And, the impacts were going to be primarily outside of the US, and they just did not evaluate very strongly. So again, we're really focused on projects that are occurring - activities that occur outside of the school and that are not linked to the school's curricula for this particular funding opportunity.

I'm now on Project Evaluation on Page 8, and I want to say that we place tremendous emphasis on evaluation for your project. We expect to see fairly well thought out front end needs assessment descriptions. Informative and summative evaluation plans. We expect to see these detailed in your project description as much as possible. We also expect that project evaluations should be handled by external professional evaluators, or by internal staff who have significant experience with evaluation, and are not otherwise substantively involved with the project.

Additionally, if you're doing a project that involves the creation of some sort of digital interface, you may also need to contact an evaluator with specialized expertise in evaluating those types of interactive, in addition to a content focused evaluator. So, we really expect quite a lot of emphasis on evaluation. We should see it in your project narrative, as well as in your budget narrative.

Finally, there are -- under Evaluation -- projects involving any sort of spherical display system related projects, there we have additional guidance on evaluation further down in the FFO that you want to take a look at.

All right. I'm now on Page 9, and this is the beginning of the spherical display focused section. And, this section goes on from Page 9 through 14. So as you can see, this takes up a lot of space in our funding opportunity, and there's a lot of detail here. And if you're planning a project that has anything to do with a Science On a Sphere, or a Magic Plant, or an OmniGlobe, or any of the other three dimensional physical spheres, you really need to invest some time and read these details.

We will be providing support for projects that include installation of spheres in public exhibits. We will also support programming that's related to spheres. For example, creating interactive or other types of programming that support (broad learning) with spheres, including content development. We will support -- in summer -- education for professional development and training programs to help docents and other interpreters explain what people are seeing on spheres. And, we will also support advanced evaluation efforts related to spherical display systems.

So, I really recommend that you read the detailed description. And specifically, we have a network of institutions that we work with that have received funding for Science On a Sphere, and related to spheres. And, that network meets every 18 months. In each meeting, we produce a network workshop report.

In that workshop report, we have broad guidelines as to - that should guide future projects that are related. And, we have links to that workshop report which we just published throughout this section of the FFO. So, please take a look at that workshop report, as well as reading Pages 9 through 14 in the funding opportunity.

And then, if you have - we also ask that anyone who has a sphere related project, talk with Carrie McDougall -- that's me -- or John McLaughlin about their project, because we really need to make sure you're fitting in with where we would like to see that program go.

So, I think that I am - that takes us through Page 14. Oh, I have one other section. So, I'm now on Page 14 of the FFO, and the only other thing I'm going to say before I turn it back to Sarah is the timelines for these projects is such that we see letters of intent coming in February 16. We will take a look at those, and we hope to provide you some feedback. But, if we get 500 of them, we may not be able to provide all of you feedback.

Full applications come in April 6. We will review them. And then, we hope to make awards by September 30, 2010. So, we are on a fairly compressed timeline, and so we would expect project dates - project start dates for your projects to be no sooner than October 1, 2010. All right.

So, now I'm going to turn it back to Sarah, and she's going to pick up where I just left off.

SS: Okay. So now we're at the top of Page 15 in the FFO, on Program Priorities. Please note that this program has two priorities. Priority 1 is for large-scale projects. That is projects with regional to national scale implementation. They should either involve geographically distributed organizations and institutions, or networks of organizations and institutions that support the proposed activities, or results in a product or model that is broadly distributed or transferred to other institutions and organizations during the project period.

So, we're talking about something with multiple partners, broad distribution; large scale projects, okay. And, you'll see that the funding levels -- in a moment, I'm going to talk about that -- reflects the scale of the priority.

Priority 2 is for smaller-scale projects. That is those that occur over a shorter duration, and have local to regional implementation. Basically, we're talking about proof-of-concept projects. And if you're interested in doing a Science On a Sphere, or any spherical display system installation, without - with minimal to no accompanying educational programming, that would go in Priority 2.

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A little bit further down the page, we're on Funding Availability. Okay, we will have no more than $7.5 million to hand out this year. This is a highly competitive program. If you look at the last five years of funding, 7% of the requests that have come in have been funded. We'll probably make between seven to ten awards across both priorities -- that's total awards -- out of this funding opportunity. So, keep that in mind. There are a lot of you on the call. I know there's a lot of interest in this and I understand that. But, you should also be realistic about your chances here, okay.

For Priority 1, the minimum amount you can request for Priority 1 is $500,001, and the maximum is $1.25 million, okay. So, if it's below that or above it, it does not fit into Priority 2 - yes, Priority 1. Sorry. For Priority 2, basically, it should be no less than $200,000, and it should be no more than $500,000.

Now here's the kicker. We're not allowed - if you accidentally submit - when you go into Grants.gov and submit something to the second priority, and it actually is a budget size that's for - that's large and fits in Priority 1, we are not able to make that move. So, it's imperative that you all choose the right priority for your budget. We don't have the flexibility -- the lawyers didn't give it to us -- to move between the two priorities, as much as we would've loved to do that.

So, that's going to be important because that's the minimum requirement, and it could - if there's a problem and you submit to the wrong one, it could disqualify your application, even assuming you've gone through all the other steps and everything was fine with the letter of intent. Okay, so keep that in mind. $200,000 to $500,000 for the smaller priority, Priority 2; and $500,001 to $1.25 million for the large priority, or Priority 1.

I'm now on Page 16. Just like we have separate funding amounts for the different priorities, we also have different duration periods expected for the priority. Priority 1 applications, that's the large scale projects, must cover a project period of two to five years. We're not going to be handing out more than $500,000 for a one year project with this funding opportunity. If you have a smaller scale project, it can be between one and three years. These things are hard and fast rules. They are minimum requirement, and they must be met for your application to go on to review.

And as Carrie already stated, start dates for your project period should not begin before October 1, because of the time frame - or timeline we have for this competition this year.

A little bit further down the page, I'm on Eligibility of Applicants. We've already alluded a little bit to this, but I just want to draw your attention to it. Eligible applicants are institutions of higher education, other nonprofits, and state, local and Indian tribal governments in the United States. For-profit organizations, K-12 public and independent schools and school systems, foreign institutions, foreign organizations and foreign government agencies are not eligible to apply. That means they can't be the lead organization on the project. They cannot submit an application to us.

However, for-profit and foreign organizations can be project partners. And so, they can come in as a co-PI, or some other - just not the lead institution. Additionally, because we are encouraging partnerships with NOAA entities, you know, obviously we expect that you may have a Federal agency called NOAA that might be a partner, but they will not be eligible to receive Federal assistance under through this announcement, but may be project partners.

And then, if you'll flip over to Page 17, at the top of the page, one last thing I'd like to emphasize under Eligibility. If you are a PI on a project, you may submit an application as a PI through this funding opportunity one time. However, we recognize that often you may work at a very large institution, and more than one department may want to submit an application. And so, we're not limiting that to - we're not limiting the number of applications that could come from an institution. You may serve as a co-PI on other applications. You just can only be a PI on one application.

All right, moving down the list here. I'd like to just touch - or, call your attention to C on Page 17, Other Criteria that Affects Eligibility. This more or less reiterates other things - things that are listed in the FFO. It's just to call your attention to them, because it has to do with the minimum requirements. These are the kinds of things that will boot your application out from review. So, pay attention to those.

And the one I'll call your attention to now, and we'll go over a little bit in a moment, has to do with having all the required elements of your application, and in the format that is prescribed. I'll talk a little bit about that later.

You need to know how to submit your application, and I'll touch on letters of intent in a moment. But, the application that's due in April, we strongly recommend that you send them through Grants.gov. You really should only be submitting a paper application if you don't have Internet access.

All right, I'm now at the top of Page 18, and I'll just draw your attention to the fact - as we've said more than once, you need to submit both a letter of intent and full application. And, what's going to follow below this is the form and content for those two documents.

We have an extensive FAQ that we've put together, and I'm sure we'll be adding to it after this call. But, we have an extensive FAQ, and so I draw your attention to that, because many questions about forms and how to fill them out, and how to package things, and where to get the templates are - can be found through that link.

The section on Form, this has to do with the format for your application, and you need to adhere to that format in order for it to pass minimum requirements.

At the bottom of Page 18, here's where we talk first about the content for letters of intent. It's very brief. It's not supposed to be more than three pages. We actually have developed a little template so you have the information we need to see in it, and the link - the URL for those templates, actually, for all of our templates, and also including a checklist for applications, is on that link there that ends with funding_templates.html.

So, I highly recommend you bookmark that page and become familiar with it. But basically - so, if you need to know what to put in the letters of intent, it's explained there at the bottom of Page 18.

And so now, I'm going to turn over to Page 19, and we're looking at the Required Elements for Application. I will not read through these ad nauseam, but I will just point out that you do

need to read through this carefully. The things that you see that are required forms, I think with the exception of the SF-LLL, because that'll be in the non-mandatory documents on Grants.gov. The rest of them will be in the mandatory documents. So, you'll have access to those through Grants.gov.

We have -- as I've already mentioned -- provided a number of templates for these different sections. If there's a template provided, you'll see it. You'll see a link to it in the descriptions that start on Page 19.

I'm now on Page 20, and the only thing I'll mention about this - you can see there's a fairly lengthy description -- a couple pages - a page and a half -- on what needs to go in your project description. This is basically your full justification for your project outside of your budget justification, milestone chart, letters of support, and references and so forth. It can be no more than 15 pages.

And one thing that I would recommend to you all is that you do go to that funding templates page. There's not only a template for the project description, we've also created a checklist so that you know how we would prefer you label files that you're uploading into Grants.gov, so you don't have to guess about that. The preferred format - you're not required to do any of this, but it's recommended.

It'll make things much easier in processing your application on our end, and it's also a way for you to ensure that you've submitted everything that we're expecting to see as part of your application. So, I recommend you use that checklist when you're creating your full applications. It really wasn't a necessity to do that for the letters of intent, so I don't think there's one provided there.

Okay, I'm not going to belabor anymore on that page. If you'll skip over to Page 22. This is part of the section on Budget. I'm drawing your attention to this because we get this question all the time, and that has to do with the range of budgets for project evaluations, which Carrie emphasized earlier in her part of the discussion - or presentation. So you know,

we don't have a hard and fixed number that we expect you to have in terms of a percentage of your budget, but a range is offered there.

And you know, think about it, relative to your project and what seems reasonable. It definitely should be part of your budget, and if you don't have a line item in your budget for evaluation, and it's not being provided as (any kind of) support that you have a letter of commitment for something, you're project is not going to review well. So, keep that in mind.

I don't think I'm going to cover anymore on the internal workings of the application. You can go through that. It's through Page 23. Basically, you need to have Letters A through J in this section, or well, A through I are required. J is your letters of commitment, and we strongly suggest that if you are partners, you ought to have a letter of commitment backing up that partnership and stating exactly what it is.

I will also tell you - I don't think this is stated in here, but generally, letters of support that are just sort of feel good letters that don't really explain what the partnership is and how it's going to work, don't really bear any - they have no bearing on the review. So, they don't really help your proposal in any regard. So, keep that in mind as well.

Let's see. All right. So, at the bottom of Page 23, Submission Dates and Times. We've gone over them. 5:00 pm Eastern Standard time for the letter of intent, February 16. 5:00 pm Eastern Daylight time April 6 for the full application. Here is where we have the information on the top of Page 24 of where to submit your letter of intent. There's the email address there, oed.grants@noaa.gov. They'll be time and date stamped by your server, and that's our indication that it was sent on time.

We are planning on doing - you know, we will respond - you will get a response that your email was received. If you don't get one from us within 72 hours of the deadline, you need to call Stacey Rudolph at that number to confirm that we got your letter.

The information for applications is right below that, because that's coming through Grants.gov, those are time and date stamped by the Grants.gov system. If you look a little bit further down the page, note that there are two automated email receipts.

So, it's not enough to get the first one. You also need to get the second one, which confirms that there weren't any errors in your submission and they were able to transmit it to us, okay. From Grants.gov to (Grants Online), which is our - basically, from Grants.gov to NOAA. Okay, so two emails confirmed from Grants.gov. Not - the first one is important, but the second one is even more important, okay.

And then because Grants.gov can take up to two business days to validate or reject your application, I - we always strongly recommend you don't wait until 4:00 pm on the due date to submit your application, if possible.

And then last, again, we're strongly discouraging hard copy applications, but if someone doesn't have Internet access, we do have to make that option available. Please follow the instructions for how we want to get hard copy applications. Don't send them through the US Postal Service, because they will take four weeks to get to us, and they likely will be brittle and stuffed together through the radiation that happens to any piece of mail that comes to us here in the Department of Commerce. It's a holdover from the days of the Anthrax scares.

So, use an expedited mail carrier. You know, we're not trying to give them business, but this is the way we found that we can track - you can track an application that it was submitted before the deadline, and we can track it because you know, if for some reason it doesn't show up within a day or two. We also - if you're going to submit a hard copy application, please email us at the email address provided so that we are looking for it.

All right, I am now on Page 25, and I'm just calling your attention to additional information about Grants.gov. The mission - if you've never done this before, really read through these paragraphs carefully.

All right. Other information on addresses to submit letters of intent, and the applications are reiterated multiple times on Page 26, and then we get to the bottom, and that is where the Evaluation Criteria for your applications begin. I'm not going to read through them because it would take up to much time.

But in addition to the section on your application package in the Project Description section of your application package and what we need to see in that, this is your guidance for what's going to - how your project will be evaluated by external reviewers.

So, read these criteria carefully. Know that these are the ones that are provided for evaluators to use in looking at their application. They get a copy of the FFO. They - you know, they'll see what our program objectives are. They'll see what we've requested from you all in your project descriptions and budget sections, and they're going to look at these criteria.

And the percentages that you see listed after each initial statement in each criterion, that is the weight of that particular criterion. So, you can see how much we weight Relevance, and Technical Merit, and so on and so forth. All right, so pay attention to that. Read through it. And, when you're you know, finishing your application, make sure you look at that stuff when you think about your final read through and think, "Have I addressed all of those concerns?"

Okay, I'm on Page 29 now. This is the Review and Selection Process. So, the only minimum requirement we have for the letter of intent is that it arrives on time, okay. So, that minimum requirement. For your application that would come in April, there are additional minimum requirement. And, we do what we call an administrative review to ensure that you have a complete application, it was on time, that you're eligible to apply. That you acted within the budget limits for your priority. That it's in the proper format, and that it's got the proper project duration.

Now keep in mind, it says here project duration is one to five years, but you really - you should pay attention to - did you submit to Priority 2 and it's between one and three years, and under - $500,000 and under? And, did you submit - or did you submit to Priority 1 and its two to five years, and it's a minimum of $500,001 and $1.25 million? So, that's the kind of stuff to think of in terms of making sure you're eligible to go to review.

Once we pass the minimum requirements stage, your application gets assigned to reviewers. We will have review panels for these applications. They will be reviewed either by probably a

mix of Federal and non-Federal experts. We work very hard to make sure that we have the relevant expertise on our panel of four. The project types that have been submitted - we have a minimum requirement of three reviews per proposal by NOAA's standards. We often try to get more than that if we can. It will somewhat depend on how many proposals we actually receive in the end.

So, that's the review process. Once we come out of the review panels, we'll have a rank order for your application. Whenever possible, we try to follow that rank order in making our funding decisions. But, there are factors that are applied in selecting out of rank order, and those are listed at the bottom of Page 30 there, so - or they start on the bottom of Page 30. So you can see what those are, and they also continue through the top of Page 31.

The other thing I'd like to draw your attention is once we get through the selection process, we will be coming to you all -- this would probably be in the late May to early June timeframe -- if we need revisions to any of your budgets, we need additional information to address concerns that the reviewers had, and so on and so forth.

And then, I think that's really it. The rest of the information - you know, look at it. You need to be aware of it. There's a section on - starting on Page 33 on reporting. Once you have an award - the only last thing I'll call your attention to for today is the last page, 34, because that's where contact information and our Website are listed for reference. Okay.

So at this point I'm going to turn it back over to Carrie.

CM: Okay. One other thing I want to say, because I don't think either of us said this, is regarding your letters of intent. We are hoping to review each letter and ideally provide each one of you feedback about your letter. Now, if we do get an overwhelming response, we may not be able to provide substantive feedback for each one of your letters, other than we received it.

But, what we're striving to do minimally is if you submit a letter of intent and we review, and we determine that your project does not really sound like it would review well, we will respond that we don't think it will review well and that you should consider either making

significant changes to your plan or not really submitting the project for the full - for a full application that's due April 6.

So, you will receive minimally feedback that we received your letter, and we are striving to provide you additional, more substantive feedback regarding the subject of your project, and whether we think it's appropriate for this FFO or not.

Okay. We are not going to turn to the part of the call where we hear questions from you. So, we're going to get the operator on the line and have her unmute all of your phones. But what we're going to ask is that - because there are so many of you on the phone, and we could potentially have a problem with background noise on your line, we ask that you, at this point in time, mute your phone either with your phone's mute button - and if your phone does not have a mute button, this teleconference line allows for muting by using the star 6 keystroke function.

So, please mute your phones right now, and we are going to take you all off of the universal mute that we have you in. So, hold on for a second.

Question and Answer Discussion *(back to top)*
- Erica, *Discovery Science Center*: Partnerships
    - Question: Partnering with NOAA personnel – National Office or closest local office?
    - Answer: Any NOAA entity regardless of location
- Avida, *University of Colorado InSTAR Institute*: PI's
    - Question: Are there restrictions on who can be PI? (Can an artist be a PI?)
    - Answer: No restrictions. Reviewers will review appropriateness of PI based on CV and project.
- Erica, *Koshland Science Museum*: Visualizations and Spherical Display
    - Question: Do any visualizations that we do have to be on a spherical display system?
    - Answer: If you are going to be working on global visualizations, we have provided guidelines that are relevant to sphere or non-sphere visualizations. Does not mean that every visualization must be on a spherical display.
- Dan Marsh, *Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden*: Spherical Display/SOS
    - Question: Will funding cover expense of purchasing SOS?
    - Answer: Yes.

- Lynn, *UC Davis*: Interagency efforts on climate change education
  - Question: Is this grant applicable for interagency applications?
  - Answer: Yes, if you are coming to us to fund a project that is partially funded by another federal agency.
- Sarah, *Sea Grant* Spherical Display/SOS
  - Question: Are we limited to spherical display systems already in existence or can we develop our own system?
  - Answer: Would need to be very well-justified in terms of why existing systems are not meeting your needs and why a new R&D effort is needed.
- Becky, *Biodiversity Project*: Scope of Grant Opportunity
  - Question: Does this grant cover projects inland, perhaps on Mississippi River?
  - Answer: Absolutely.
- Mary Casanova, *Literacy Volunteers*: Type of technology
  - Question: Any preferred informal science education technologies for grant?
  - Answer: Nothing other than language in FFO. What makes sense for your audience. Will hurt you if you don't include internet or other advance technologies and if you focus on print exclusively to provide information.
- Karen, _____ *Education Center*: Priority 1 or 2
  - Question: Can you submit a grant for Priority 1 for the education department and a separate grant for Priority 2 for an SOS for the aquarium?
  - Answer: Would recommend that you submit that as one large project. You can include a spherical display in either priority.
    - Priority 1 is meant for projects that have impacts greater than one institution or one area. Even if you project is $1 million, if it limited to an audience at your institution, it is still not Priority 1. Need to think about budget and scale of impact when determining your appropriate Priority.
- Pat Tine, *Northwest Maritime Center*: Technology
  - Question: We do a lot of outdoor experiential learning. We need to focus on emerging technology to be eligible?
  - Answer: Experiential learning is eligible, but project should integrate emerging technology into experiential learning outdoors.
- Mary Casanova, *Literacy Volunteers*: Target Audience and Priority 1 or 2
  - Question: Nationwide student and teacher audience. Does that affect our Priority?
  - Answer: This funding opportunity is not focused on formal education. Needs to be outside formal learning environments.
    - Need an offline conversation/
- Nick Gross, *Boston University*: Spherical Display/SOS
  - Question: We are developing an SOS program (show) and looking to disseminate it through SOS network. Does that count as national impact and Priority 1?

- o   Answer: You would need to indicate in application that you have partners in SOS network that are committed to utilizing the programming.
- Rick Horton, *Oregon Zoo*: Budget
  - o   Question: No match required?
  - o   Answer: No match required, but projects that leverage funding do better.
  - o   Question: Geographic distribution of spheres – if there is already a sphere in town, does that impact our application?
  - o   Answer: You should indicate why your sphere would be providing something additional – different use, different audience, etc.
- Avida, *University of Colorado InSTAR Institute*: Evaluation
  - o   Question: What kinds of guidelines do you have for evaluating impact on web?
  - o   Answer: Need to use an external evaluator with expertise in web evaluation.
- Rob, *Texas __ University*: Partners
  - o   Question: I've got a project in Caribbean (Puerto Rico and USVI) and larger reach. With partners from non –US territories. Can they partner on a grant?
  - o   Answer: Yes, you can bring in those partners, but know that there does need to be a significant impact on US audiences.
- Ilka, *Gulfquest*: Producing films
  - o   Question: On Page 5, there is a section on not producing films. We wanted to create a film for SOS related to our region. Would this project be disqualified?
  - o   Answer: Content for SOS is not considered films in this case. We mean traditional, large-screen films are not allowed.
- Kate, *Alaska*: Eligible applicants
  - o   Question: On page 16, there is a section on eligible applicants. Can you talk a little bit more about frequent participation of minority-serving (Alaska Native and Hawaiian) institutions?
  - o   Answer: We encourage participation of minorities and underserved audiences when it makes sense. Not a requirement. If you have partnerships with those institutions, we recommend that you involve them in your project.
- Glen Miller, *Arizona State University*: Spherical Display/SOS
  - o   Question: What additional information we need from John and Carrie about SOS?
  - o   Answer: Because SOS is a large display and has a lot of physical and software requirements, we want to avoid people getting too far down the road developing a project and then finding out that your facility can't manage an SOS. We will ask you some basic facility questions to see if you can support an SOS installation.
- Maria, *University of Hawaii*: Hybrid audiences
  - o   Question: Can we have projects that target both informal and formal audiences?
  - o   Answer: Primary audiences are informal or nonformal. We want emphasis to be on informal aspect of your program. May need to talk offline.
- Jacqueline, *City College of New York*: Conflict of Interest

- o Question: My institution has a resource center funded by NOAA (EPP) and is a Hispanic-serving Center. Is there a conflict of interest in us applying for this grant?
  - o Answer: No, just be sure to be focused on nonformal audiences.
- Alisha, *The Smile Program*: Audience
  - o Question: Our program works with underserved students in science and math clubs and involved teachers. Are these students and teachers considered informal audience? Other people are involved, including a partnership with Hatfield Marine Science Center.
  - o Answer: Grey area. If the afterschool program is not being run by the school and not purpose of enhancing their curriculum, then it would fit under the grant.
- Reed, *Northern Illinois University*: Producing films
  - o Question: We would like to make videographic materials for displays. Can that footage be used later for a movie after the project? Would be presenting video information gathered on field operations as web-based sharing of the video with informal science institutions. Our primary interest is having it for displays and videographer would use it secondarily for creating a movie.
  - o Answer: As long as the video data serves something other primary purpose for informal display.
  - o Question: Primary equipment using was funded by NOAA several years ago. Does that count as a NOAA asset?
  - o Answer: No.
- Linda, *Porthousen Marine Science Center*: Future Funding Opportunities
  - o Question: Can you clarify if there will be future FFOs? (bottom of page 15)
  - o Answer: This FFO will be the only one in FY10 for these types of projects and none in FY11 will be for informal education.
- Sunshine, *Rhode Island*: Target Audiences
  - o Question: Would a program primarily aimed at professional development for professional journalists be eligible?
  - o Answer: Don't think so. PD should be focused on informal educators, docents, etc.
- Ivan, *University of Connecticut*: Spherical Display/SOS
  - o Question: Do caves and domes fit as innovative display systems for Priority 1?
  - o Answer: Yes.
- Mary, *Exploratorium*: Priority 1 or 2 review process
  - o Question: Will the priorities be reviewed by separate panels? If we applied for both, could we possibly get funded for both?
  - o Answer: Reviewed by separate panels. In theory, you could be funded for both, but in reality we don't tend to fund the same institution twice in the same FFO.
- Mary, *Alaska*: Audience
  - o Question: Our program has youth participating in an informal summer science experience but can opt to get credit for school. Does this count for this FFO?

- o Answer: If they can get credit, it is not eligible.
- Rob, *Texas ___ University*: Copyrighted materials
  - o Question: If we generate copyrighted materials, does NOAA get copyright?
  - o Answer: We deal with that in the negotiations phase. Depends on the product.
  - o Question: Do NOAA partners have to be entities or can they be individuals?
  - o Answer: It can be individuals or entities.
- Lisette, *Monterey Bay Aquarium* (?): Priority 2
  - o Question: What does proof of concept mean?
  - o Answer: If you have a project idea but haven't been able to pilot test it or tried to scale it up, you can apply under Priority 2. Particularly relevant with our emphasis on emerging technologies as a way to allow institutions to try out technologies you are interested in.
- Jake, *Philadelphia*: Audience
  - o Question: We have a science Camp. We follow curriculum in schools but are not connected to schools. Are we eligible? We do experiments relevant to what they are doing in school. Participants are recruited through school, but also through other neighborhood groups.
  - o Answer: This is a grey area – need to talk offline. Needs to fall into one of the project type categories.
- Erica, *Discovery Science Center*: LOI
  - o Question: How closely does LOI need to match final application and budget?
  - o Answer: Need to be able to match LOI and application so they should be obviously connected, but we realize that you might make significant changes. You may also retool your project based on our possible feedback regarding your LOI. However, you don't want to jump between Priority 1 and 2 between LOI and application.
- Karen, *Georgia*: SOS
  - o Question: Where do I find price information for SOS?
  - o Answer: Contact Carrie or John and we can direct you on how to get a price quote. There is variability based on site.
- Avida, *University of Colorado InSTAR Institute*: Institutions
  - o Question: I am affiliated with several institutions (3 universities in Europe and Wells NERR and University of Colorado). How do I choose the primary institution?
  - o Answer: The institution must be eligible to apply and must make sense for your project. Must be a U.S. institution.
- Scott: Audience
  - o Question: For organizations that go into schools (i.e. portable domes) to give presentations, are we eligible? We are a community-based organization, but we present to schools. We don't have a facility of our own. We do also do an in-field component.

- o Answer: If you are going into schools to reinforce their learning, you might want to wait apply for formal K-12 opportunities. Next K-12 focus will allow involvement of spherical display system with formal environments. Could apply with in-field component now and formal education requirement later.
- Laura, *Kansas City Zoo*: SOS
  - o Question: Installation of sphere in a public exhibit. Is there a problem because we charge admission?
  - o Answer: No.